

stakeholders what they envisioned for a second century of national parks. A nationwide series of more than 40 listening sessions produced more than 6,000 comments that helped to shape five centennial goals. The goals and overarching vision were presented to President Bush and to the American people in May 2007 in a report, "The Future of America's National Parks."

Continued and better stewardship was one of the five goals.

We must be better stewards of national parks when it comes to clean water. More than one-half of our 407 national parks have waterways deemed "impaired" under the Clean Water Act and in need of attention. These are parks whose local domestic water supply and protected natural resources are dependent upon and often affected by the quality of surface water flowing into and through their respective designated boundaries.

As stewards, we must carry out our responsibilities with respect to clean water. I am particularly sensitive to this responsibility. One hundred thousand streams and rivers, as well as thousands of acres of wetlands, provide the freshwater that flows into the Chesapeake Bay. Restoration of the Chesapeake Bay watershed is managed by the Chesapeake Bay Program, in which the National Park Service serves as a Federal agency partner. In order for our restoration efforts to succeed, we must ensure clean water flows in the streams that lead into the Chesapeake Bay.

Our national parks are our legacy to the next generation; conserving them is our shared responsibility. The 2016 centennial of our parks is a prime opportunity for renewing this commitment.

75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE USO

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, I would like to honor the United Service Organizations, USO, and especially the USO of Illinois, as they celebrate their 75th anniversary of keeping servicemembers connected to their family, home, and country throughout their service to the Nation.

Since 1941, the USO has been the Nation's leading organization to serve our military men and women and their families. The USO has continuously adapted to the needs of our servicemembers and their families as they have provided support from the moment servicemembers join the military, through their assignments and deployments, and when they transition back to their communities.

USO centers are found throughout the world at airports and military installations, providing around-the-clock hospitality to service-members and their families. In addition to supporting servicemembers and their families at home, the USO has a tradition of bringing American entertainment and music to our troops overseas.

The USO of Illinois touches the lives of over 330,000 Active-Duty, Guard, and

Reserve military servicemembers and their families throughout the State. The USO of Illinois provides over 300 programs and services throughout the year to enhance the quality of life for our servicemembers and their families, including family support events like tickets to the theatre or sporting events, programs designed for military children, prepare care packages for Illinois servicemembers deployed abroad, and providing support and appreciation at homecomings and deployments at airports. The USO of Illinois is a non-profit organization relying on the generosity of individuals and corporations and hundreds of volunteers.

I congratulate and commend the USO and the USO of Illinois for their continued efforts to support Illinois' servicemembers, their families, and our veterans.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. KIRK. Mr. President, today I wish to discuss a serious threat my constituents face when they travel on one of the 270 trails, spread out over 700 miles, in Illinois. Unfortunately, hikers share these trails with bacteria-carrying ticks, which can infect travelers with a variety of diseases, including Lyme disease.

For those infected, Lyme disease manifests in multiple ways, including fever, fatigue, rashes, and severe pain. Current diagnostic tests are unreliable, causing many people with the condition to be misdiagnosed. Left untreated, it can lead to even more serious and debilitating illnesses.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC, Lyme disease is the most commonly reported vector-borne illness in the country, with an estimated 300,000 people infected each year. The CDC also reports that the species of ticks that spread Lyme disease now live in 46 percent of the Nation's counties.

I commend Senators BLUMENTHAL and AYOTTE for introducing the Lyme and Tick-Borne Disease Prevention, Education, and Research Act, S. 1503, and I urge my colleagues to join me as a cosponsor of this critical bill. The legislation will better coordinate the Federal Government's response to tick-borne diseases by creating an advisory committee within the Department of Health and Human Services, or HHS, to be comprised of patients, physicians, researchers, and government officials who will be tasked with identifying best scientific practices to combat tick-borne diseases. The bill requires the HHS Secretary to strengthen disease surveillance and reporting, develop better diagnostic tests, create a physician-education program, and establish epidemiological research objectives for Lyme and other tick-borne illnesses.

The prevalence of Lyme and other tick-borne disease cases in recent years demands a strong and coordinated effort at the Federal level. Now is the time to pass this critical legislation.

TRIBUTE TO GROVER FUGATE

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today I wish to honor the career of one of Rhode Island's most respected ocean and coastal experts, my friend Grover Fugate.

Grover has served as executive director of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council, CRMC, for nearly 30 years, protecting Rhode Island's coastal resources through research, regulation, and restoration.

One of the shining jewels of CRMC's work has been its innovative Special Area Management Plans, or SAMPs. These plans are ecosystem-based management strategies developed in collaboration with government agencies, municipalities, and other stakeholders to best manage coastal systems. During Mr. Fugate's tenure, the council has developed eight management plans, including the groundbreaking ocean SAMP, the first formally adopted ocean spatial plan in the country. The ocean SAMP guides future uses of Rhode Island's marine areas. In developing the plan, CRMC engaged a diverse group of stakeholders and laid the groundwork for cooperation among a multitude of regulatory agencies that led the way for the successful development of the Nation's first offshore wind farm off the coast of Rhode Island.

The council has also helped Rhode Island towns and residents understand the increasing effects of sea level rise and storm surge. Using the latest climate change predictions and state of the art modeling, CRMC, in cooperation with the University of Rhode Island and others, developed an online tool, STORMTOOLS, that gives anyone with an Internet connection free access to information that can be used to help decide everything from what neighborhood to buy a home in to where to site a new stormwater treatment plant. Mr. Fugate has been a key leader in establishing STORMTOOLS and educating decisionmakers about the realities of sea level rise and flooding.

In addition to his work for the Coastal Resources Management Council, Mr. Fugate serves as the State colead for the Northeast Regional Ocean Council's Ocean Planning initiative and the Northeast Regional Planning Body established under President Obama's 2010 Executive order. He also serves as adjunct faculty for the University of Rhode Island's marine affairs program and a guest lecturer of coastal and marine law at the Roger Williams University Law School.

Mr. Fugate has earned many awards for his work, including the 2010 Susan Snow-Cotter Award for Excellence in Ocean and Coastal Resource Management from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the 2010 Regional Sea Grant Outstanding Outreach Award, the 2008 Coastal America Award for Habitat Restoration, and the 2008 Rhode Island Sea Grant Lifetime Achievement Award. He has authored numerous academic journal articles on coastal and natural resources management issues.

Mr. Fugate's work on the ocean SAMP and Northeast Regional Planning Body has placed Rhode Island at the forefront of ocean planning and offshore wind development. He is a leader with a passion and commitment to protecting ocean and coastal resources. His technical expertise, ability to foster good working relationships with key stakeholders, and talent for finding solutions within the existing regulatory framework are a few of the many reasons I wish today to recognize him.

TRIBUTE TO CURT SPALDING

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize a notable Rhode Islander. Curt Spalding, the outgoing Administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's region 1, is retiring this year. Throughout his career, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to protecting our environment.

The iconic waters of New England are part of what make this region a very special place to live. Since taking the helm of EPA region 1 in 2009, Administrator Spalding has worked to bolster coastal resilience, clean our lakes and rivers, and improve New England communities through innovation and science. Among his priorities was renewing the region's focus on bettering stormwater pollution control, a particular concern for Rhode Island's coastal communities as they prepare for sea level rise and increased rainfall. His focus on stakeholder engagement led to EPA's first-ever, real-time water quality reporting tool, which relies on New England citizen scientists, professional researchers, and a myriad of other groups for data and outreach.

Administrator Spalding has routinely been a leader identifying innovative and cooperative solutions to difficult problems. He worked with Senator REED and me to establish the Southeastern New England Coastal Watershed Restoration Program, SNEP. SNEP, a collaboration between government agencies, researchers, and nongovernmental organizations, works to protect and restore coastal watersheds by addressing the excess nutrients and other pollutants that undermine water quality in the region. So far SNEP has made available over \$12 million to improve coastal water quality, restore coastal ecosystems, and address nutrient pollution.

Administrator Spalding has also championed programs to clean the waters of Cape Cod and restore Lake Champlain, and his work in Boston Harbor is another national success story, turning one of the most toxic harbors in the country in the 1980s into one of the cleanest urban beaches in the Nation today.

Prior to serving with region 1, Administrator Spalding was the executive director of Rhode Island's Save the Bay for nearly two decades. While executive director, he oversaw construction of

the Save the Bay Center at Fields Point in Providence, RI. The center, which won the Phoenix Award for brownfields redevelopment, transformed a former landfill into a landmark facility that provides classroom spaces for Save the Bay's educational programs and serves as a living example of the organization's approach to environmentally friendly shoreline development. Under his leadership, Save the Bay grew into a nationally recognized, 20,000-member environmental advocacy and education organization.

Administrator Spalding's passion for his work and the environment is obvious. His vision for a vibrant, resilient New England had shaped the great work of our region's environmental and coastal communities for the last three decades. I hope during his retirement Administrator Spalding finds the time to enjoy some of the very areas he has spent a career protecting.

Curt, my friend, may the wind always be at your back.

REMEMBERING BENJAMIN CHARLES STEELE

Mr. TESTER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have the statement I previously delivered about the life of Benjamin Charles Steele printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

BENJAMIN CHARLES STEELE, BILLINGS, MT

I rise to honor the life of an exceptional Montanan and a true American hero, Benjamin Charles Steele. He passed away on Sunday, September 25 in Billings, surrounded by his loving family. He was 98.

Ben was born on November 17, 1917, in Roundup, MT. He was 22 when he enlisted in the Army Air Corps in Missoula, MT, on September 9, 1940. A year later, assigned to serve in the Philippines, he arrived in-country and was promptly handed a rifle and told: "now you're in the infantry." Then, 10 hours after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese invaded the Philippines. A few weeks later, Ben's unit was ordered to the Bataan Peninsula. Soon after, Ben's unit was captured, and he and his fellow soldiers began the infamous Bataan Death March. Ben was a prisoner for 3.5 years and was sent to Japan where he did hard labor in the Japanese mines. He was liberated once the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, with Ground Zero less than 80 miles from Ben's coal mine.

Ben was discharged from the U.S. Air Force on July 10, 1946. After beginning his art career drawing on the concrete floor of a prison in the Philippines, Ben pursued a formal art education. In 1955, he received a master's degree in art from the University of Denver and then taught art at Montana State University-Billings.

Up until his final days, Ben continued to paint, even while fighting his final battle in a nursing home in Billings. Ben Steele never requested any acclaim for his service, but he deserves recognition for his incredible courage in the face of daunting odds.

Ben's life story and legacy will be forever remembered across Montana, and on the west end of Billings, a middle school is currently being constructed that will bear his name.

Ben is survived by his wife, Shirley, and their two daughters, Julie Jorgenson and

Rosemarie Steele. He will be remembered by a grateful State and Nation for his brave service in our time of greatest need.

TRIBUTE TO MICHELE CRAIG

Mrs. CAPITO. Mr. President, I wish to recognize a dedicated public servant and advocate for the people of West Virginia, Michele P. Craig, on her retirement. Ms. Craig stepped down from her role as executive director of KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission and Region II Planning and Development Council on July 1. Her 30 years of service have benefited the State of West Virginia and the Huntington area.

Michelle received a bachelor's degree in economics from Queens College in Charlotte before completing graduate work at West Virginia University and American University. After beginning her career in Washington, she returned home after losing her father in the Marshall University plane crash of 1970 and began working in the family business. During this time, she also served in the West Virginia House of Delegates from 1973 through 1978.

In 1986, Michele went to work for Region II Planning and Development Council; within a year, she became executive director. During her tenure, Michele oversaw a staff that grew from 4 to 13 individuals, serving Cabell, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, Mingo, and Wayne Counties. I have had the pleasure of working with Michele and her staff on numerous projects benefiting the citizens of West Virginia. Her wealth of knowledge, professional expertise, and poise were integral to these accomplishments. My staff and I will miss Michele as she moves on, but she has left behind a strong foundation for the future.

Aside from her role as executive director, Michele has served her community through several organizations, including the Prester Foundation, Ronald McDonald House, and Hospice of Huntington. She is also an avid reader, gardener, and world traveler. Michele is married to Thomas L. Craig, and together, they have three children.

I wish Michele all the best as she spends more time with her children and grandchildren, enjoying her favorite activities and continuing her philanthropic endeavors and service to the Huntington area. Throughout her career, she has made a positive difference in the lives of many West Virginians. It has been an honor working with her, and it is an honor to call her my friend and fellow West Virginian. I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring her service.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO WANDA DRAPER

• Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, a fellow Baltimorean and dear friend of mine, Wanda Queen Draper, is retiring today